

COMMUNIST AND GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES IN LAOS

1. Reports from all sources indicate a substantial amount of current Communist activity in Laos, and since the armistice the Communists appear to have made much more effective use of time than has the Laotian Government, as indicated by the following reported Communist activities:

- a. Extensive training and reorganization of Pathet Lao forces;
- b. Pathet military occupation of Sam Neua and Phong Saly provinces and the denial of these areas to administrative personnel of the Laotian Government despite Pathet acknowledgment "in principle" of Laotian Government authority over these provinces;
- c. Forced recruitment of Laotians for Pathet military units in training. Official French-Lao figures estimate 4,000 Laotians were conscripted by the Vietminh between 20 August and 20 September 1954;
- d. Vietminh shipments of military supplies, including weapons and uniforms, to the Pathet forces;
- e. Presence of Vietminh political-military cadre in each platoon-size unit of the Pathet forces, who are reportedly well-armed with a variety of weapons;
- f. Occurrence of frequent Pathet attacks on the Royal forces in the Sam Neua area.

2. As further evidence of continued Communist activity, the French claim to have intercepted orders from Vietminh General Giap directing Pathet Lao forces to attack all local Royal forces in Sam Neua and Phong Saly.

3. These Communist activities appear directed towards a program of establishing military, political, and administrative control over Sam Neua and, to a lesser degree, Phong Saly provinces, in order to:

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- a. Reinforces the Pathet Lao bargaining position in current negotiations with the Royal Government for political integration and reconciliation leading to eventual subversion of the present government; or, in the event favorable integration fails and the Pathet Lao-Royal Government negotiations break down, to
- b. Have a going Communist "Laotian Peoples Government" firmly established to vie on a "legal" and military basis for the eventual control of Laos.

In contrast to the Vietminh organization in South Vietnam, which is generally well established and self-supporting, the Pathet Lao organization is in its infancy. It is without significant native support, and direction must come from outside. The Vietminh probably desire to put the organization on its feet so it can present a better facade as an indigenous movement before the Western Powers have time to bolster the Laotian Government and puncture Laotian illusions regarding their "wayward Brothers" in the Pathet Lao.

4. The danger posed by the relatively weak and immature Pathet Lao movement is increased by the following factors:

- a. The continued naivete of the Laotian Government, Premier Katay in particular, regarding Pathet Lao motivation and affiliation. Certain Laotian officials are reported to regard the Pathet Lao as "wayward brothers who can be lured back into the fold";
- b. The reported deterioration in French-Lao relations. Since the Laotian Army lacks qualified field officers and relies on the French for senior command, the reported Laotian exclusion of the French from the Laotian Army field command would lead to a serious deterioration in Laotian Army effectiveness. The Geneva Accords so restrict foreign assistance, other than French, that continued French-Laotian cooperation is imperative if the Royal Army is to retain any capability for dealing with Communist subversion;
- c. The Laotian Government's reluctance and delay in dispatching troops and civil administrators to the Phong Saly and Sam Neua areas which are currently Pathet Lao, and hence Vietminh, outposts in Laos;

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- d. The activities of the allegedly Thai-sponsored "Free Laos Movement" under Patsarath. Patsarath's attempts to enter the Laotian Government are causing uneasiness in Laos, and should he enter the scene in combination with Pathet Lao figure-head Souvanavang, ostensibly to "save" Souvanavang away from the Communists, the chances of Communist infiltration of the Laotian Government would greatly increase. More basic factors, such as the geographical isolation of the area, the difficulty of access by the IGO in response to alleged armistice violations, the general indifference and indolence of the Laotian people and their lack of political sophistication, and in particular the inefficiencies and inexperience of the government and its regional administration, also invite Communist activity in Laos. Recent Pathet aggression in the Sam Neua area may dissipate some of the dangerous Laotian illusions.